

REMARKS

Claims 1-22, 25-44 and 47-50 are currently pending in the application. Claims 23, 24, 45, 46, 50 and 51 have been previously canceled.

Claims 1-12 and 14-17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Roe, U.S. Patent No. 5,998,695. This ground of rejection is traversed.

The present invention claims an absorbent article having a selectively-permeable topsheet with at least one treated hydrophilic zone and at least one non-treated hydrophobic zone. The surface area of the portion of the topsheet that is treated corresponds to the predetermined insult point. The specification defines the term “selectively permeable topsheet” as a topsheet comprising an inherently hydrophobic material which is partially treated at a predetermined zone (including one or more than one contiguous areas) with a material that renders the treated portions substantially hydrophilic while the untreated portions remain hydrophobic.

Thus, applicant’s topsheet is substantially hydrophobic in nature, prior to treatment, due to the properties of the material constituting the topsheet (or as a result of initial treatment). However, certain areas of the topsheet have been made hydrophilic as a result of treatment by a treating agent. These areas are primarily the insult areas. The objective behind making the insult areas hydrophilic is to aid the quicker absorption and withdrawal of the insult to provide the wearer with less discomfort.

The Examiner states that Roe discloses an absorbent article including an apertured film or web that can be made hydrophobic by treatment with a hydrophobic material. This is supported by col. 6, lines 45-47 of Roe which explicitly states that “the lotion may function alone or in combination with another agent as the **hydrophobizing** treatment described above” (emphasis added). Thus, Roe is deemed by applicant to actually teach away from the present invention by directing the use of a hydrophobic treatment lotion, rather than the hydrophilic lotion of the present invention.

While Roe also discusses in very general terms the treatment of hydrophobic materials to render them hydrophilic (see col. 6, lines 1-7), this treatment is not directed to any particular area of the topsheet. Thus, with respect to hydrophilic treatment, Roe does not disclose or make a distinction between various zones or portions of the topsheet. Roe makes reference to a topsheet which can be made hydrophilic throughout, with the apertures in the film or web providing for

removal of the exudate. In other words, Roe does not teach selectively making certain regions hydrophilic.

In contrast, the inventive concept of the instant invention recognizes that the insult area is the portion that requires high wicking capacity, and a hydrophilic zone. The remaining portion of the topsheet of the present invention remains hydrophobic so as to prevent the absorbed exudates from causing irritation to the wearer.

Claims 13, 18, 19-22, 25-28, 29-44 and 47-50 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Roe in view of Guidotti et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,741,241. This ground of rejection is also traversed.

The examiner has cited Guidotti et al. as showing a portion of an absorbent article designated as a wetting area. However, irrespective of the disclosure in Guidotti et al., Roe makes no distinction between topsheet regions or zones. Roe teaches that the topsheet is either completely hydrophilic or hydrophobic. The present invention, on the other hand, utilizes zoned areas, and provides that such areas are selectively hydrophilic.

Furthermore, Guidotti et al. merely mentions the wetting area, and does not describe how to determine this area. Applicant respectfully submits that simply mentioning the wetting area, combined with the knowledge of hydrophobic and hydrophilic materials as taught by Roe, would not lead a person of ordinary skill in the art to design a topsheet with hydrophilic portions, while retaining an overall hydrophobic character.

In view of the above, applicant submits that Guidotti et al. does not remedy the deficiencies of Roe. Even when the references are combined, assuming such a combination is within the purview of one skilled in the art, the results of such a combination would still fail to teach or suggest the present invention.

Accordingly, the present application is now believed to overcome the remaining rejections, and to be in proper condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections, and allowance of this application, are therefore respectfully solicited. The Examiner

is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below to facilitate the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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